

these countries' level of economic cooperation with the United States through bilateral investment treaties.

As the senior Senator from Utah, I am very fortunate to represent a State with many far-sighted international commercial ventures, and the language I proposed, which Senator BROWNBAC has thoughtfully accepted, supports those interests by requiring the Secretary of State to report annually on the progress that is being made in negotiating investment treaties with nations of the region. I believe this measure will, for the time being, be sufficient to monitor progress in these important negotiations and will alert these nations to the serious concerns that the U.S. Congress has in protecting U.S. investments abroad. U.S. companies investing in this region should have the protections of bilateral investment agreements.

This is entirely consistent with the strategy of the "Silk Road Act," which is posited on the accurate belief that increased U.S. participation in this region is fundamental to their development and our interests.

The economic component is only one part of the strategy of this amendment. By promoting infrastructure development, democratic political reforms, sovereignty, independence, and conflict resolution, the Brownback proposal will contribute to political stability and progress as well.

Last fall, during a visit to the region, I went to the Republic of Georgia and renewed an acquaintance with Edouard Shevardnadze. An artful negotiator as foreign minister in the last years of the Soviet Union, President Shevardnadze returned to his native Georgia, which became independent as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union. As President of Georgia, Edouard Shevardnadze has been a stalwart promoter of democracy and an open economy, and he has done so under very, very difficult circumstances.

Close to one-quarter of his nation's territory is not under central government control. Russian soldiers remain stationed on some of that territory, against the will of the Georgian government. President Shevardnadze has twice narrowly avoided assassination—one of his assassins freely resides in Russia today. In my discussions with President Shevardnadze, we discussed the need for increased U.S. attention to this region and increased participation by U.S. commercial interests. This "Silk Road Strategy Act" promotes these goals.

The region of the world that this act addresses remains rife with internal conflicts, cross-border incursions, and—perhaps most disturbing—continued challenges by radical Islamic interests, supported in many cases by the extremists in Iran. If these conflicts succeed in destabilizing the region, millions of people recently freed from nearly a century of communist totalitarianism will be denied their economic and political progress, nations

surrounding the region will be drawn into wider conflicts, and international markets will be affected.

Further, and most importantly, if this region slips toward instability, I am deeply concerned that the U.S. will see the Central Asian and Caucasus States become the source of many future conflicts. Some of these conflicts could have troubling transnational consequences that directly affect us, such as the spread of terrorism and international crime.

I commend Senator BROWNBAC for this valuable legislation, which makes a solid and important step in refocusing U.S. interests to a part of the world that is important to us now, and will be even more important in the future.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today in support of this amendment and the preservation of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. It is important that we maintain our commitment to the Armenian people.

One of the greatest foreign policy priorities in the post-Cold War world is to assist former Communist countries in making the difficult transition to democracy. The fall of the Soviet Union was not the final victory of the Cold War. That will come only when all of these former adversaries embrace liberty, free markets, and the rule of law. Senator BROWNBAC's underlying amendment has the potential to further economic and political progress in the Caucasus and Caspian Sea regions. In its current form, however, it severely weakens one of Congress' central achievements of the post-Cold War era.

The 102nd Congress in 1992, passed the Freedom Support Act. This bill acknowledged that we can help countries make the transition to democracy both with the carrot of economic aid and the stick of withholding such assistance. It included a provision, Section 907, which mandated that Azerbaijan will not receive any direct economic aid until it ceases the blockade of neighboring Armenia and the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Even still, the United States has supported the Azeri people with over \$180 million in humanitarian assistance through NGOs since 1992. The Foreign Operations Appropriations bill itself also allows OPIC and TDA activities in Azerbaijan which we approved last year.

The Azeri blockade of Armenia and of Karabakh is a direct result of the dispute between the two countries over the status of Karabakh. This is the longest-running ethnic conflict in the former Soviet Union. So far, the human cost has been 35,000 lives and 1.4 million refugees. Outside of the conflict, the brutality of the Azeri blockade has been equally devastating for Armenia. As a land-locked country where only 17 percent of the land is arable, its ties to the outside world are its lifeline. Humanitarian assistance cannot get to Armenia, which is still trying to rebuild from the devastating

earthquake of a decade ago. In Karabakh, the blockade has produced a critical shortage of medical equipment.

True regional cooperation is unrealistic as long as this conflict continues. By passing the underlying amendment in its current form, we are virtually guaranteeing that the OSCE peace process will fail. Armenia will have little incentive to participate in the future, and Azerbaijan will receive the message that its rejection of any future peace proposals is acceptable. I support Senator BROWNBAC's attempts to promote an East-West axis in the region, and I believe it is critical that we encourage these former republics to look westward. By allowing the blockade to endure, however, we are leaving Armenia with only North-South options. If our intent is to truly improve the quality of life in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, we must make a positive impact on the Caucasus without undermining our commitment to the Armenian people. I urge my colleagues to support the McConnell-Abraham amendment and allow Section 907 to remain in place.

VISIT TO THE SENATE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, MOHAMMED HOSNI MUBARAK

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator HELMS, is recognized.

Mr. HELMS. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I have the honor and privilege of presenting to Members of the Senate and to the Pages the distinguished and very popular President of the Republic of Egypt, Mohammed Hosni Mubarak.

RECESS

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess for six minutes so we can greet President Mubarak.

I thank the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:13 p.m., recessed until 4:19 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SESSIONS).

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, which amendment is pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending amendment is No. 1165, offered by Senator BINGAMAN of New Mexico.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask the Bingaman amendment be set aside.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 1125, 1146, 1150, 1151, 1158, 1162, 1163, 1167, 1168, AND 1173 THROUGH 1177, EN BLOC

Mr. MCCONNELL. There are a number of amendments that have been cleared by both sides that I send to the desk:

Amendment No. 1125 by Senator SMITH of Oregon related to CDC; amendment No. 1146 by Senator LAUTENBERG related to war crimes; amendment No. 1150 by Senator HELMS related to Serbia; amendment No. 1151 by